

Dear Federal Communications Commission:

I have recently learned that the Federal Communications Commission will be making a decision regarding AT&T's avoidance of more than half a billion dollars in obligations owed for its prepaid calling cards. This reckless maneuver threatens to destabilize rural telecommunications, jeopardize Internet access in our schools and libraries and put at risk the nation's commitment to affordable, reliable access to a dial tone for all of its citizens. As a responsible citizen, I am expected to pay all of my bills on time and in full. Please hold AT&T to this same standard and reject the company's self-serving scam.

Even if I am forced to listen to an advertisement before placing my calling card call, I know that I am still placing a phone call. As such, AT&T has an obligation to contribute to universal service. By avoiding more than \$160 million in universal service obligations, AT&T has put affordable access to telephone service at risk for thousands of low-income and rural families. I find this reprehensible, and I hope that you put a stop to it.

Equally worrisome is AT&T's unilateral decision not to pay for its callings cards' use of local telecommunications networks. The tab? \$340 million and counting. That's a significant sum that could destabilize local telecommunications, particularly in rural areas, and hinder investment in advanced services, like high-speed Internet. The availability of low cost, reliable communications is an invaluable asset that knits together families, friends, businesses and our country. High speed internet has enhanced all these functions. As the internet and computers develop, high speed internet is fast becoming the only practical way in which to take advantage of these advances. Telecommunications in rural areas must not lag behind technology.

Perhaps most disgraceful is AT&T's excuse: If it has to pay its bills, then it has to raise the price of its calling cards. Don't buy into this veiled threat. In today's marketplace, consumers have plenty of choices from companies that manage to pay their bills and offer affordable calling options, and that marketplace will prevent AT&T's threat from becoming reality.

I can't imagine what would happen to any individual or company that had more than \$500 million in unpaid bills, especially when they have the profits available to pay them! Please make sure AT&T is not above the law and does not receive special treatment not offered to other communications companies. I urge the Commission to reaffirm that AT&T's prepaid calling card service is what it is: a telecommunications service. I ask you to require AT&T to pay what it owes to universal service and for use of local telecommunications networks-more than half a billion dollars, plus applicable penalties. And, I encourage you to act swiftly, so that other companies don't follow AT&T's bad example. Please act now!

Thank you!

Sincerely,

John O. McCoy

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